

## March 2014 RI Legislative Update

### Overview I: Minimum Wage

As of this writing there are five pieces of legislation submitted so far in this session regarding a significant minimum wage increase. H 7056 submitted by Rep. McLaughlin would increase the minimum wage from \$8 to \$9 effective Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 – with no other provisions. H 7194 (Rep. Bennett) calls for \$1 increase in each of the next two years and then a COLA provision for years thereafter. Both of these bills had preliminary hearings and are being held for further study. An additional House bill H 7695 (Dickinson) calling for an increase to \$9.25 for 2015 was submitted last week. On the Senate side Sen. Lynch submitted S 2249 - a companion bill to H 7194 - and Sen. Raptakis submitted a bill calling for COLA increase annually not to exceed 25 cents.

Of the five bills submitted the two submitted by Sen. Lynch and Rep. Bennett seem to have much more support. They are also very similar to the program outlined by two candidates for governor State Treasurer Gina Raimondo and Mayor Angel Tavares. The Association has meetings set up this week with both sponsors this week to reemphasize our industry's position as well as introduce the possibility of consider "training wage" and "student exemptions" inclusions. Both of these Senate bills will have hearings this week. If you or your company is opposed to these minimum wage bills please consider testifying or submitting letter of opposition.

### Overview II: Plastic Bag Ban

Rep. Cimini has submitted another plastic bag ban bill this year H 7178. It has a companion bill on the Senate side submitted by Sen. Lombardo S 2314. These bills ban the use of plastic check out bags and unlike last year's bill has no provision for mandatory charges on paper (which would be kept by the retailer). Neither bill has had a hearing as of yet.

### Other Areas of Interest:

Bridge toll bill gives Assembly more time to vet transportation proposal

Rep. John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Portsmouth, Tiverton) introduced legislation that would ultimately accommodate a full vetting process for an equitable alternative to Sakonnet River Bridge tolls. The legislation (2014-H 7569) extends the date that the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority (RITBA) may impose a toll on the Sakonnet bridge – not to exceed 10 cents – from April 1, 2014 to July 1, 2014. Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (D-Dist. 12, Middletown, Newport, Little Compton, Tiverton) plans to submit identical legislation in the Senate.

Bills expand, improve review process of state Office of Regulatory Reform

Legislation was introduced in the Senate and House of Representatives to improve and expand the review process of the Office of Regulatory Reform (ORR) as it works to improve the state's business regulations and permitting procedures. One bill allows review of the nearly 20 percent of regulations that had been excluded when the ORR was created. The bills (2014-S 2480, 2014-H 7520) were sponsored by Sen. Erin P. Lynch (D-Dist. 32, Warwick, Cranston) and Rep. John G. Edwards (D-Dist. 70, Portsmouth, Tiverton). The other legislation (2014-S 2457, 2014-H 7703) will synchronize the review timetables being undertaken by both the ORR and the Office of the Secretary of State. Those were introduced by Sen. Walter S. Felag Jr. (D-Dist. 10, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton) and Rep. Patricia A. Serpa (D-Dist. 27, West Warwick, Coventry, Warwick).